

TERRORISM

IN THE FIGHT BETWEEN TERRORISM AND ESTABLISHED POWER, TERRORISM NEVER –OR ALMOST NEVER– WINS. REVOLUTIONS CAN TRIUMPH, TERRORISM CANNOT.

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errorism is by no means a new phenomenon, but neither would it be true to say that it has ever been as evident as now in the life of many countries. Those demoniacs of Dostoevsky, and their models in Tsarist Russia, might seem to us to be very modest artisans of violence compared with present-day terrorist organizations of differing ideologies. Advances in science and technology have also favoured terrorists –Logically enough, since these advances are available to everyone. All the same, we should ask ourselves if these are the only developments in modern terrorism.

The spread of terrorism has led to the existence of different groups of practically every possible shade, and we now find its tragic red stains in most parts of the world, proclaiming a multitude of demands. Its networks have jumped international borders, just as the attempts to fight it have done in response. But has this widely varied spectrum any common denominator? Terrorism is a sudden blow aimed at the established power, although nowadays the power under attack differs substantially from the autocratic state symbolized by the Tsars. It might be a dictatorship but it could also be a government elected under acceptably democratic conditions. And since scientific and technological advances are even more readily available to those in power, the objects of the terrorists' attacks are more powerful today than they were yesterday.

In this way, the scale has increased for everybody, and modern terrorism, which often has very sophisticated means of action at its disposal, is still, compared with the strength of today's established powers, similar to those tiny groups that fought against an empire. Time has held up a powerful magnifying glass to these realities, but what happens in the long run is that, though on a different level, the balance of



power between terrorism and established government carries on being more or less the same as ever.

This explanation seems to be one which the terrorists have not understood: that in the fight between terrorism and established power, terrorism never –or almost never– wins.

Revolutions can triumph, terrorism cannot. It was not terrorism that stormed the Winter Palace or put

Somoza to flight. In the history of revolutionary victories, terrorism might sometimes have played a secondary part, but never a leading one. It is as if what fascinates the terrorist –and I am not speaking now of the mercenary who tends to accompany him– is the minute partial victory, rather than the final victory, as if the latter were reserved somewhat scornfully for other, commoner people.

But all these considerations, and many others we could make, should not disguise the degree of justice there might be in the terrorists demands, or more precisely, in some of the demands of some of these groups. All the same, terrorist actions always have one result which no amount of justice can erase: the spilt blood of the victims, and especially of those victims who have nothing to do with the fight. This is where the justification which all terrorism finds, or tries to find, comes crashing down. In the shattered body and the life cut short, violence reveals its true, utterly repulsive face, without the false embellishment of pamphlets and impassioned arguments.

And what about the terrorism of some established powers, the terrorism of some states? They are even older, and have claimed more victims than the other. The real progress of societies, which would be the progress of consciousness plus the progress of science and technology to serve it, has to be incompatible with all the different brands of terrorism– all enemies yet, all related.

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